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SUBJECT: Darfur: Non-Signatory Conference Best Way Forward

This is an action request, please see paragraph 6.

¶1. SUMMARY: Darfur Partners Group met on October 4, 2006, at British Ambassador's residence. The meeting was hosted by the UK Ambassador and included Charge D'Affairs Cameron Hume, the French Ambassador and representatives from the Netherlands, Norway, Germany, the EU, and the UN. After a review of the security situation in Darfur and the recent visit by the President of the European Union (EU), the "Gang of Four/Five" presented a plan to hold a Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatories conference as soon as possible. In addition to requesting financial support, the Gang outlined several details that must be resolved before a conference can be held. End Summary.

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North and South Largely Stable, No Change on UN Troops  
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¶2. Following a short discussion of the action points from the Darfur Partners Group Meeting of September 20, 2006, the British Security Officer provided a brief synopsis of the current security situation on the ground. He said that despite heavy reinforcements of the GoS military that have been observed in El Fashir, including ground troops, attack helicopters and Antonovs, the overall security situation in the north has remained relatively stable. Notwithstanding the attack in Al-Guraydah (South Darfur) against Minni Minawi's SLM/A forces by the SLM/A Free Will Movement, the overall security situation in the south was also reported to be relatively stable. The military capability of the SLM/A Free Will Movement was questioned and it was thought that without GoS support, its capability was limited.

¶3. The meeting between the President of the E.U., Jose Barosso, and President Bashir was also briefly mentioned. No change in the GoS stance with respect to U.N. peacekeepers was envisaged. The U.N. was also waiting a response from the GoS as to their consideration and acceptance of the proposed U.N. light support package with regards to the A.U.

¶4. The "Gang of Four/Five" (US, UK, Netherlands, EU, and Norway) briefed the meeting on the current status of its non-signatories project. They explained that momentum has been building, even without the international community's active support, to hold a DPA non-signatories conference within the next several weeks. The consensus was that facilitating such a conference, albeit not ideal, was better than doing nothing. The Gang believes that international support is imperative if the conference is to get off the ground. A notional budget of \$200,000 was submitted for consideration. Before a conference can be held though, several questions/hurdles have to be answered/overcome. They are as follows:

-- Participation: Should the conference be restricted to military commanders only or should it be all inclusive to include politicians, IDPs and intellectuals/academics?

-- Venue: Should it be held in Darfur to facilitate military commanders' participation, or in Nairobi or Kampala to facilitate non-resident Darfurian's participation?

-- Facilitator: Three NGOs (i.e., Justice Africa, SUDO and DISA) have met with the Gang with their proposals to host the conference. As each NGO has its own agenda, care must be taken. The consensus was to contract with two of the NGOs, providing oversight throughout.

-- GoS: The government does not support the conference and is currently inviting some military commanders to Libya to put pressure on them to sign the DPA.

-- UN: Although the UN had been invited to be a member of the Gang, no participation on their part has been forthcoming. UNSR Pronk is now actively promoting a conference in parallel to the Gang's, which raised concern for some in the Partners' Group.

-- AU: To ensure a successful conference, especially if held in Darfur, the A.U. must be brought on board. Their assets may be needed to provide transportation to the conference.

-- Eritrea: Eritrean interference should not be underestimated and they, like the UN, may be promoting a conference of their own.

-- Funding: The Partners Group thought that the preliminary cost estimate of \$200,000 was possible. Respective governments will be canvassed for sources of funding.

15. Lastly, the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID) representative briefed the Darfur Partners Group as to a recent visit to the Omdurman party offices of SLM/Minawi. Support for party capacity building and office equipment would be sought.

16. ACTION REQUEST: CDA Hume requests that funds in the amount of \$50,000 be made available as the USG's contribution to the DPA Non-Signatory Conference. To be an active player in the process,

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financial support must be forthcoming as soon as possible.

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